



## VISHAL NAITHANI: BELIEVES IN LIFE & CAREER COACHING

Vishal Naithani, Ex HR Head, Oyo and Shuttl shares a few key learnings and suggestions that will help young professionals shape their careers.

Post his MBA from MDI, Gurgaon, Vishal Naithani started his career with the Essar group as a part of their corporate HR team. After which he has worked for 13 years at leading organisations including Xerox, Sapient, Shuttl, and Oyo Rooms at various HR leadership positions. As a certified Professional Coach, Naithani partners with individuals to help achieve their personal goals and lead fulfilling lives through deep, immersive coaching conversations via his coaching practice, Resurgence Human Capital. In this interaction, Naithani talks about the future of work, critical career tips and the importance of well-being given the current uncertain times.

**During this time we are more dependent on technology being part of the human resources team. How does this impact future hiring?**

Well, this impacts employers and candidates both. Companies are now more open to interview candidates virtually and are offering jobs that are permanently remote working. These are indeed signs of changing times and we will not see all pre-COVID roles going back to physical offices. This acceptance gives companies access to a boundaryless, global talent pool since walking into office spaces to work will not be a norm for certain job types anymore! From the candidate's perspective, we are already seeing video resumes as the



new norm. Body language is a key trait during an in-person interview process, this will to a large extent now be out of the equation. So, individuals will have to rework on their candidate pitch, keeping in mind whether the interview is video or telephonic and tweak it accordingly.

Those keen to explore remote roles will have to learn important new skills like using video conferencing platforms, effective time management (since they will be operating from home offices) and managing teams virtually. With increased adoption of technology and advent of remote working, hiring strategies will definitely see some permanent changes when the dust finally settles down.

**This pandemic has created a sense of insecurity in people about the future making it more difficult for people to stay positive. Please share your thoughts on how you suggest people stay positive?**

I believe that this is the best time for people to either explore new skills or re-ignite old ones. The current pandemic is a testimony to the fact that one cannot be solely dependent on one set of skills especially how things are shaping up around us. This will bring in not only a sense of financial security but greater self-confidence as well.

Secondly, reach out to people! Stay connected. Even a couple of calls a day to near or dear ones helps maintain that social and emotional bond that all humans crave for. Call people without an agenda, even if it is to drop a quick 'hi'. These constant interactions not only help the one reaching out but equally the other person being reached out to as well. This is even more critical for younger folks working and staying alone. They definitely need that emotional support and might not always readily reach out to others.

Lastly, look at practicing mindfulness or meditation. The benefits of meditation are scientifically backed and proven through various research. What exercise does to the body; mindfulness does to the mind. Both are equally important for leading a healthy, well-balanced life. Especially now given the current times when our socializing is restricted, this might be the best time to learn and practice it.

**This lockdown has forced many companies to bring in reforms in terms of how corporates function. What are your thoughts and how do you see this changing the**

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**corporate world going forward?**

I see an increased acceptance of work-from-home or remote working arrangements in the immediate future by corporates. Albeit forced, but what we see around has proved that remote working arrangements can work seamlessly if managed well. This also saves a lot of real estate and infrastructure costs for most companies who are often vying for centrally located offices for their employees.

We will also see most training/learning programs move online to cater to a nationally (or globally) distributed workforce. Technology adoption is on a high by employees given the current times and this experiment will become a norm for corporates because of sheer scalability and reach.

Most companies around have taken a major hit on their revenues and the repercussions are here to stay for a couple of years. Companies will now be extremely prudent in hiring for only key roles and keep a strict control on direct and indirect costs, especially salary budgets. This will also have a direct impact on salary increments and annual bonuses which will be significantly muted for most organizations.

Perceived soft skills like morale, trust and empathy will be the need of the hour now, more importantly for supervisory roles. These have

suddenly come to the fore in current times as managers are rarely getting to meet their teams in-person and thus these traits become all the more important in managing distributed teams.

**You have experience in some of the leading and well-funded corporates, tell us about your learnings. Any future tips for young aspirants reading this?**

I have been lucky to experience the best of both worlds, from global MNCs to early and growth stage start-ups and the journey has been truly fascinating. Sharing a few key learnings and suggestions that might help young professionals to shape their careers through informed choices.

Early in your career, learn on-the-job as much as possible. No college, institute or MBA can teach about the intricacies and nuances of real, full-time, hands-on work! For folks in colleges, look for meaningful internships and projects.

Create time and do as many internships as possible and get a real taste of the actual work environment. If you solely start your career with your marksheets and academic knowledge, you will take a long time settling down. Connect with people, write to them, show how can you add value to their organizations and what problems you can help them solve?

Don't be afraid to make mistakes. It is ok if you do, making mistakes is a part of the journey. If you inadvertently made a mistake, own up, record what you learnt and ensure that you help others to learn from it as well. The biggest life learnings (not only career) will come from personal mistakes and the most uncomfortable

of situations. Don't forget that no one achieved greatness from their comfort zones. Learn to be comfortable with discomfort.

Choose a manager or mentor who genuinely cares about your professional and personal development. Your job satisfaction and work engagement will depend not only on the employer brand or your salary or your designation but primarily on the quality of your manager. If you find someone like that, stick to them and learn under their wings. Such leaders not only help their teams become better at work but also help them become better individuals.

Do not forget to work on your soft skills. As you progress in your career, you would have proven your mettle and thus functional skills are a given and IQ is assumed to be appropriate for

one's area of expertise. However, what is going to really take your career to the next level is your EQ or emotional quotient or emotional intelligence. From early days, start engaging with successful professionals and observe their techniques towards networking, team management, negotiation skills, dealing with difficult stakeholders and rapport building. These are the skills that will determine how far and at what pace do you progress at work.

**How do you keep yourself mentally and physically fit especially during this lockdown?**

Given the current movement restrictions and gyms and clubs being shut, regular walks are the only saving grace at this point in time. Equally

important is mental well-being and fitness. With in-person socializing drastically reduced for the right reasons, technology has been a saviour to be connected to your near and dear ones. I make it a point to make a call to at least one friend or family member every day. These calls are without a pre-set agenda and one may call them a simple 'check-in call' to feel connected and not let physical distance stop us from reaching out to people and vice-versa. We are community beings and might feel out of sorts with such sudden, forced changes in proximity to our kith and kin. Thus, I would suggest focusing on mental health slightly more given the extended lockdown period as a result of the ongoing pandemic

**How would you define success? Any quote you swear by**

I am a practitioner of Servant Leadership, an HR Leader and also a professional Life Coach. My personal success is determined by how many individuals I have helped and how many lives I have touched in terms of others realizing their true potential. On similar lines a quote that I live and swear by is, 'We Rise by Lifting Others'.

My coaching conversations are mostly around personal success. It is insightful to learn and observe how this yardstick is so unique and personal to each and every individual. People are more than just a job title and capable of more than they imagine. If I have to sum it up, I'd say that, "success is achieving whatever makes you thrive in life, not merely live, but thrive by offering the world the very best version of yourself!"

**This lockdown has given us the time to explore our interests and passions, have you learnt a new skill or discovered a Hidden Talent?**

The lockdown has certainly freed up time for me and I spend most of this on my existing hobbies of reading and writing, especially in the areas of human behaviour, psychology, and emotional intelligence. Life & Career Coaching is something that I have been practicing for some time and that is what brings me the most joy. More so because the current uncertain times have negatively impacted employment and thus mental well-being of so many individuals around and Coaching helps me positively impact their lives. Another new skill that I plan to explore in the immediate future is the art of mindfulness for holistic self-awareness. ▲

